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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MAY 28 MEETING WITH UZBEK
INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

Classified By: Ambassador Richard B. Norland; reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Inoyatov told the Ambassador on May 28 that Mutabar Tojiboyeva might be released on medical grounds, that Sanjar Umarov would not be released anytime soon, that Human Rights Watch's office in Uzbekistan would remain open but its current representative would not receive accreditation, that Rabbi Gurevich would be expelled soon (something the Israeli Ambassador accepts), and that TRANSCOM General Schwarz' visit in late June was on track but the proposed stop at the rail terminus in northern Afghanistan should be dropped. Inoyatov is clearly one of two or three top power brokers in Uzbekistan, a key gatekeeper to President Karimov and a decider of issues large and small that do not necessarily fall under a strictly intelligence purview. End Summary.

12. (C) National Security Service (NSS) Chief Rustam Inoyatov received the Ambassador on May 28 at our request to discuss issues pertaining both to Embassy operations and to broader foreign policy including human rights. Inoyatov expressed appreciation for the Ambassador's evident interest in improving U.S.-Uzbekistan relations, curiously emphasizing that "operational information" keeps him closely informed of every aspect of the Ambassador's opinions and activities. His style alternated between engaging and menacing, depending on the topic. He appeared overweight and ponderous, but otherwise alert and in reasonably good health.

"Housekeeping Issues"

13. (C) Consular Access: The Ambassador requested consular access to AmCit Vitaliy Itkin, recently detained by the NSS along with his Israeli and/or Austrian brother(s) on charges of fraud. (Our requests to MFA had gone unanswered.) Inoyatov called for the case file and explained that the issue involved not only fraud but possible espionage on behalf of Tajikistan (sic). He undertook to arrange consular access. (Note: Plans for our Consul to visit Itkin on May

30 were shifted by the government of Uzbekistan (GOU) at the last minute to June 2.)

14. (C) Militia Procedures: The Ambassador outlined our concerns about recently imposed procedures outside U.S. and other embassies which require the militia guards to note down the passport information of all Uzbek visitors. Inoyatov

cited vague security concerns and joked that U.S. intelligence was surely too smart to try to bring its "agents" into the Embassy. The Ambassador cited delays created by these procedures when we host cultural events. Inoyatov undertook to explore ways to "ease" the impact.

Human Rights

15. (C) Citing Assistant Secretary Boucher's upcoming visit and decisions to be made in Washington in June on possible visa sanctions, the Ambassador told Inoyatov that now would be a good time for the GOU to take additional tangible steps to show progress on human rights.

16. (C) Mutabar Tojiboyeva: The Ambassador noted that releasing prominent critics like Tojiboyeva would send a powerful signal. Inoyatov acknowledged that her health is not good and said that following medical consultations that will take place soon, it was possible she might be amnestied on medical grounds.

17. (C) Sanjar Umarov: Inoyatov was absolutely not inclined to look at Umarov the same way. Umarov was a "thief" who still owed the Uzbek government millions of dollars which he had "stolen." Umarov and his exiled relatives Khidayatov and Bobur were part of a political movement that only sought to seize power. If, however, Umarov "compensated" Uzbekistan, he might one day be set free. (Note: A credible source has told us that the GOU is asking for \$8 million.)

18. (C) Human Rights Watch: Inoyatov did not have good news for us on possibly reversing the Ministry of Justice letter

to HRW stating that Igor Vorontsov would not be accredited. Inoyatov said Vorontsov "is not the right person" ("ne ta figura") and went on to imply that the NSS suspects Vorontsov of working for Russian intelligence. (Comment: Vorontsov has told us the Russian Embassy here twice called him in for an interview with a FSB officer allegedly concerned about the welfare of Russian citizens abroad. It is possible the Uzbeks have seized on this as a pretext in their ongoing efforts to deny accreditation to a HRW representative in Tashkent. An unverified Internet report suggests the GOU may propose that HRW name a former Uzbek judge or human rights official as its Uzbekistan representative.) Inoyatov said the GOU would not close down HRW's office but said HRW "should pick someone who is thinking about how to produce positive change, someone who is here to help."

19. (C) Rabbi Gurevich: Inoyatov also viewed Gurevich as "ne ta figura" and indicated the Rabbi would be expelled from Uzbekistan soon after May 29, Israeli national day. The Ambassador pushed back, saying this would fuel criticism that might undermine Uzbekistan's reputation as a country that did not feature anti-Semitism. We had applauded the decision to allow Gurevich to remain and would not understand why he would now be forced out. Inoyatov was adamant that Gurevich had to go soon. (Note: The Israeli Ambassador, Ambassador Norland, and Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford spoke with Rabbi Gurevich on the margins of Israeli national day reception May 29. The issues do not involve anti-Semitism, but are murky and appear to involve land, money, and divisions in the Bukharan Jewish community here, in the U.S. and in Israel -- probably exploited by corrupt Uzbek officials. The Israeli Ambassador told Gurevich he should prepare to leave soon. The Israeli amplified this view in a call to Ambassador Norland on May 30, reporting that Gurevich had spoken overnight to the Israeli press, resulting in large headlines in the May 30 press which likely sealed Gurevich's fate in terms of being expelled fairly soon. The Israeli did not intend to fight this and said he was prepared to state publicly that anti-Semitism was not involved.)

110. (C) TRANSCOM General Schwarz: Inoyatov told the Ambassador he had spoken with President Karimov about Gen. Schwarz' proposed late June visit and the GOU was looking

forward to it. However, Inoyatov "asked" us not to go ahead with the portion of the proposed visit that would have taken us two kilometers into northern Afghanistan to see the rail terminus at Hairaton. Other than this, the GOU was fully prepared to facilitate the visit.

Ruminations

¶11. (C) Inoyatov expounded on familiar themes regarding Uzbekistan's past and present. After 70 years of Soviet rule, in which Russian nationals had played the key role, often behind the scenes, Uzbekistan was determined to do things its own way. Pride mattered above all else. It would take time -- Uzbekistan could not be expected to do in 16 years what the U.S. had taken a century to accomplish. Political rights would expand. Criticism was allowed -- "but some criticism can be counterproductive." He lashed out at Elena Urlaeva, who had allegedly maligned Uzbek security officers who died in the line of duty protecting the Israeli and U.S. embassies during suicide bomber attacks in 2004.

¶12. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's comment that some outsiders might not be able to distinguish whether Uzbeks feel respect or fear toward their president, Inoyatov flatly stated that Uzbekistan "is not a police state." He claimed no Uzbek citizen had ever been jailed solely for criticizing the president (comment: according to our records, this is not true). He took pride in security measures that had contained those determined to establish a caliphate in Uzbekistan. He declared that the GOU is ready to exchange information on what happened in Andijon in 2005, and invited us to go to the region.

¶13. (C) Returning to the theme of Russian treachery and betrayal, Inoyatov said the Russians had specialized in false

friendship, followed by the Turks. Uzbekistan would go where it needed to in order to find friends: the Arab world, China, Southeast Asia. Uzbekistan was landlocked and had to struggle to defend its interests, but national interest would guide its actions, not sentiment.

NORLAND